Denial of the Necessities of Religion
& the Kufr of the Shīʿah

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The Necessities of Religion (*Ḍarūriyyāt al-Dīn*)

Definitive issues of religion (*qaṭ'iyyāt*) can be categorised into:

1. Those that are categorical, clear and known to both Muslim scholars and laymen (who live among educated Muslims) alike, such as the oneness of God, the prophethood of Muḥammad ﷺ and earlier prophets like Ibrāhīm, Mūsā, and 'Īsā (عليهم السلام), the finality of prophethood with the advent of Muḥammad ﷺ, the existence of angels and jinn, the preservation of the Qur'ān, the reality of the resurrection and the next life, the obligation of the five daily prayers, the recommendation to call the Adhān before the prayers, the obligation of fasting in Ramaḍān and the prohibition of drinking wine, consuming pork and committing fornication. These are known as "*ma'lūm min al-dīn bi 'l-ḍarūrah*" – matters immediately and necessarily recognised as part of the religion taught by the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

Denial or reinterpretation of these issues by an adult Muslim results in automatic takfīr, unless: a) the person is truly ignorant due to recently becoming Muslim or not mixing with educated Muslim communities, or b) the denial occurs in a state indicating a lack of genuine agency (e.g. under coercion, in a state of insanity or as an accidental slip of the tongue).

If the denial was due to genuine ignorance on account of recently converting to Islām or not interacting with educated Muslim communities, the individual will not be deemed a disbeliever right away. They will be informed of the reality of the issue by learned Muslims. If they persist in rejection or reinterpretation after being informed, they will be considered a disbeliever from that point on. (*al-Musāmarah Sharḥ al-Musāyarah* [Maṭba'at al-Sa'ādah], 2:205–8; *Radd al-Muḥtār* [Dār al-Thaqāfah], 13:10–15; *al-Fatāwā al-Ḥadīthiyyah* [Markaz Jaylānī], p.409; *al-Fatḥ al-Mubīn bi Sharḥ al-Arba'īn* [Dār al-Minhāj], p.158)

2. Those that are categorical and clear but not commonly known. For example, certain specific rules of inheritance are definitive (i.e. established from the clear indication of the Qur'ān and/or mass-transmitted Ḥadīth as determined by the consensus of orthodox classical scholars) and clear but are not commonly known. For example, if only a daughter and a son survive a man, his estate must be divided into three parts, with one part going to the daughter and two to the son. Similarly, some specific variant readings of the Qur'ān (e.g. that of Abū 'Amr al-Baṣrī) are definitively established by transmission and consensus but are known only to the learned. In such cases, there is no automatic takfīr for ignorance or denial, even for those who mix with educated Muslim communities. However, after being informed by the learned, rejection constitutes disbelief. (*al-Musāmarah Sharḥ al-Musāyarah* [Maṭba'at al-Sa'ādah], 2:205–8, *Radd al-Muḥtār*, 13:9–10; *Ikfār al-Mulḥidīn* [Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyyah], pp.26–31; *Maqālāt al-Kawtharī* [Maktabat al-Tawqīfiyyah], p.26)

The Essence of Disbelief

In its essence, disbelief (*kufr*) is denial or *takdhīb*: rejecting the Prophet ﷺ or something he has conveyed as part of the religion. (*al-Taḥqīq al-Bāhir Sharḥ al-Ashbāh wa 'l-Naẓā'ir* [Dār al-Lubāb], 3:581)[1]

In his famous text describing the creed of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and his two famous companions, Imām al-Ṭaḥāwī (239–321 AH) writes: "The slave does not exit īmān (into disbelief) except through the denial of what (originally) entered him into it." (*al-'Aqīdat al-Ṭaḥāwiyyah*)

A person enters īmān by sincerely declaring the two testimonies of faith: embracing belief in Allāh as the only Divine Being worthy of worship and embracing belief in the Prophet ﷺ as Allāh's Messenger. The latter includes accepting the truth of everything the Prophet ﷺ conveyed from Allāh, while renouncing anything that opposes it. Hence, at its core, what brings a person into īmān is: acceptance of the truth of everything the Prophet ﷺ taught from the religion. Rejecting the truth of this ("*takdhīb*") would cause one to leave īmān and enter into kufr.

However, an individual's understanding of "what the Prophet ﷺ taught from the religion" naturally evolves. Before accepting Islām, an individual may not have known that certain definitive matters are part of what the Prophet ﷺ taught. If they reject such matters while ignorant of them, it will not constitute disbelief.

For example, before embracing Islām, a person might not have been aware that it is a necessary and fundamental belief of Islām that the Prophet 'Īsā (عليه السلام) was born miraculously without a father. They may even reject this belief when asked about it. Despite this, they still possess īmān because they have, in a general way, accepted everything the Prophet ﷺ taught as part of the religion, and their rejection of this particular belief was not based on rejecting the Prophet ﷺ but on ignorance. However, once they are made aware of this belief by learned Muslims, persisting in its denial or attempting to reinterpret it would constitute disbelief, as they have now rejected something definitively taught by the Prophet ﷺ as part of the religion.

Similarly, a new Muslim with little prior knowledge about Islām may not know that wine is forbidden in Islām, even though this is something *ma'lūm min al-dīn bi 'l-ḍarūrah*. He or she may also not know the number of obligatory prayers per day or how many rak'ats they each consist of. However, once informed by learned Muslims that this is what Islām teaches, if they reject it or attempt to skirt around it through reinterpretation, they would be deemed a disbeliever.

[1] *Istikhfāf* (belittling matters of religion) also constitutes disbelief because it indicates a lack of submission, acceptance and embrace of the truth of Islām. However, that is not the focus of discussion here.

Hence, ignorance can be a reason for averting takfīr for such cases in the limited sense described here.[2]

[2] This is also one possible explanation of the ḥadīth about the man who instructed that he be burned to ashes after his death out of fear of Allāh. While the apparent wording of the ḥadīth indicates that the man mistakenly believed that Allāh would not be able to resurrect him once he is burned to ashes, Imām al-Ṭaḥāwī provides an alternative interpretation of his words, stating: "It was not (intended by his words) to deny (Allāh's) power over him in any particular situation. If that were the case, he would have been a disbeliever, and Allāh's forgiveness or admission of him into Paradise would not have been possible." (*Sharḥ Mushkil al-Āthār* [Mu'assasat al-Risālah], 2:29) He then reports another possible explanation, namely that this individual was ignorant (possibly due to being distant from knowledgeable believers). (ibid., 2:38)

Definitive vs Non-Definitive

Imām Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (132–189 AH) states: "Whoever denies anything from amongst (the definitive) legislations of Islām, he has nullified his *lā ilāha illAllāh*." Imām al-Sarakhsī (d. 488 AH) explains: "Meaning, he has become an apostate." (*Sharḥ al-Siyar al-Kabīr* [Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah], 5:368)

Imām al-Mawṣilī (599–683 AH) writes: "Any heterodox position (bid'ah) that contradicts evidence necessitating definitive knowledge and practice constitutes disbelief. However, any heterodox position that does not contradict such knowledge but opposes evidence requiring outward action (and non-definitive knowledge) is innovation & misguidance and not disbelief." (*al-Ikhtiyār* [Dār al-Risālat al-'Ālamiyyah], 4:99–100)

In other words, certain tenets may be required to be believed but are not definitive. Given their non-definitive nature, denial of them renders a person a sinful and misguided innovator but not a disbeliever. For example, considering other Ṣaḥābah superior to Abū Bakr (رضي الله عنه) is misguidance and innovation, yet it does not amount to disbelief. (*Radd al-Muḥtār*, 8:152–3)

Imām al-Nawawī (631–676 AH) states: "Someone who denies Makkah or the Ka'bah or al-Masjid al-Ḥarām or the procedure of Ḥajj, claiming it is not in the manner that is known, or says, 'I don't know that this place called Makkah is Makkah or if it is another location' – all of this and the like, there is no doubt in doing takfīr of the person who says this if it is thought that he has knowledge of this and has long accompanied Muslims. If he recently became Muslim or (recently) mixed with Muslims, we will make him aware of it, and he will not be excused after being made aware. The same applies to someone who alters any part of the Qur'ān or says it is not miraculous or says there is no evidence for God in the creation of the heavens and the earth or denies Heaven or Hell or the resurrection or the judgement, or he acknowledges them but says, 'Heaven and Hell, resurrection, reward and punishment mean something else,' or says: 'The imāms are superior to prophets.'" (*Rawḍat al-Ṭalibin* [Dār al-Fayḥā'], 6:496)

The original text al-Nawawī is paraphrasing here – *al-Shifā* of Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ (471–544 AH) – adds: "The one who entertains doubts about these or denies them, after searching and accompanying the Muslims, is a disbeliever by consensus and will not be excused for saying, 'I don't know,' and will not be believed in (claiming) such. Indeed, his outer reality indicates he is masking his takdhīb, as it is not possible he does not know." (*al-Shifā* [Dār al-Fayḥā'], p.853)

Some revisionist "Qur'ān-only" Ḥadīth-rejectors today question whether the original site of Ḥajj is at the location where Muslims currently perform Ḥajj. The Qur'ān and mass-transmitted Ḥadīth do not provide precise directions or coordinates for the location. The only basis is the transmitted knowledge and unanimous practice of the ummah. Despite this, revisionists who claim the location of Ḥajj may be elsewhere automatically become disbelievers, even though they ostensibly do not reject the texts but engage in a form of "*ta'wīl*" (reinterpretation). However, such *ta'wīl*, that opposes the unanimous understanding of the ummah, is so absurd

that it is the same as *takdhīb*. Imām al-Ghazālī (450–505 AH) refers to such "*ta'wīl*s" as "*takdhīb*s expressed as *ta'wīl*s" (*Fayṣal al-Tafriqah* [Dār al-Minhāj], p.87). Note the importance of consensus in determining that something is definitive in nature – a matter that will be further elaborated on below.

Definitive But Unclear

Many texts of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth show (explicitly or implicitly) that people will literally see Allāh in the next life with their physical eyes. (*al-I'tiqād wa 'l-Hidāyah ilā Sabīl al-Rashād* [Dār al-Taqwā], pp.168–182) However, the Mu'tazilah do not accept the literal understanding of these texts. They interpret some texts metaphorically and consider certain narrations to be mistaken. Outright denial of the entirety of these texts would, of course, amount to kufr. However, their metaphorical reinterpretation (*ta'wīl*) in this case renders them misguided innovators but not disbelievers. The reason is that this is a point that involves some obscurity and difficulty, i.e. the notion of physically seeing a Being Who is beyond creation is difficult to understand. Hence, *ta'wīl* in such a case averts takfīr. (*Ikfār al-Mulḥidīn*, pp.26–31; *Itmām al-Dirāyah li Qurrā' al-Nuqāyah* [Dār al-Ḍiyā'], 1:155; *al-Nibrās* [Dār Yāsīn], p.735)

Similarly, several Ḥanafī texts state that to affirm knowledge or witnessing for the Prophet ﷺ of a particular marriage session after the Prophet's ﷺ demise is disbelief because it amounts to affirming independent unseen knowledge (*'ilm al-ghayb*) for the Prophet ﷺ. However, a sufficient basis exists for *ta'wīl*: a person can claim that they are not ascribing the knowledge or witnessing as being independent but rather something shown to him while he is in his grave. (*Radd al-Muḥtār*, 8:93–4) If the person affirms that they believe the Prophet ﷺ has independent knowledge of the unseen, then of course it is disbelief. But the *ta'wīl* in this case too will avert takfīr.

Cases such as these – where the texts are definitive (e.g. affirming seeing Allāh in the next life, or negating *'ilm al-ghayb* from creation) but there can be some difficulty or ambiguity in its understanding or application – outright denial or rejection would result in disbelief but some degree of *ta'wīl* can avert it.

However, in the necessities of religion like those mentioned by al-Nawawī – which include believing that prophets are superior to the imāms – *ta'wīl* is not a valid basis for averting takfīr. The doctrine that every prophet is superior to every non-prophet human is *ma'lūm min al-dīn bi 'l-ḍarūrah* as stated explicitly by scholars like Abū 'l-'Abbās al-Qurṭubī (578–656 AH), Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (773–852 AH) and al-Qasṭallānī (851–923 AH). (*Irshād al-Sārī* [Dār Ibn Ḥazm], 2:191)

Recognising Definitiveness: The Importance of Consensus

How do we recognise that a belief is established from definitive text/s with a definitive meaning? This involves examining the texts, their sources and transmission and the clarity of their indication. Determining the clarity of their indication, however, rests in large part on the classical consensus. While defining those things whose denial constitutes automatic disbelief, Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (909–974 AH) states: "And other such things, comprising of all information that the Qur'ān and mass-transmitted sunnah have stated explicitly such that there is no scope for reinterpretation; or the ummah has agreed that this is its meaning and it is known by necessity to be from the religion." (*al-Fatāwā al-Ḥadīthiyyah* [Markaz Jaylānī], p.409)

Shāh Waliyyullāh al-Dihlawī (1114–1176 AH) states: "If a dissenter acknowledges the religion both outwardly and inwardly but he explains/interprets some of what is established from the religion by necessity in a manner contrary to the explanation of the Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn, which the ummah has agreed upon, such a person is a zindīq (disbeliever). For example, someone who acknowledges the Qur'ān and everything it contains about the description of Heaven and Hell to be true but claims that Heaven refers to the elation achieved as a result of praiseworthy traits and Hell refers to the remorse achieved as a result of blameworthy traits, and there is no Heaven and Hell in external (reality), he is a zindīq." (*al-Musawwā Sharḥ al-Muwaṭṭa'* [Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah], 2:268) He further states: "*Ta'wīl* is two types: one that does not oppose something definitive from the Book, Sunnah and consensus of the ummah, and another that opposes something that is established definitively. The latter is *zandaqah* (disbelief)." (ibid., 2:269)

By disregarding consensus, texts can become susceptible to endless and completely subjective & speculative reinterpretations. It is thus no wonder that a key part of modernist and revisionist ideology is undermining the importance of classical consensus.[3]

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[3] As for the statement of Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, "Whoever claims consensus has lied/erred," Ibn al-Humām (790–861 AH) explains that it "refers to finding it strange that a reporter of consensus discovered it on his own". Ibn Amīr al-Ḥājj (825–879 AH) elaborates: "For if he were not lying/mistaken, others would have also transmitted it. This is corroborated by the wording narrated by his son, 'Abdullāh: 'Whoever claims consensus has indeed lied/erred, perhaps the people had indeed differed.'...It is not a rejection of the actual occurrence of consensus per se, as he is far above approaching such (a view). This is further supported by what al-Bayhaqī transmitted from him, namely, that the people have reached consensus that this verse, 'When the Qur'ān is recited, then listen to it attentively and remain silent,' (Qur'ān, 7:204) pertains to ṣalāh. This is a report of consensus. Thus, it is unsurprising that his (Ḥanbalī) followers explained that he said this out of caution based on the possibility of a disagreement existing that has not reached (the reporter); or he said this about those lacking awareness of the disagreements among the salaf. Aḥmad stated the validity of consensus in an open-ended manner on numerous occasions." (*al-Taqrīr Sharḥ al-Taḥrīr* [Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah], 3:105)

The Qādiyānī Case Study

Take the case of the Qādiyānīs ("Aḥmadīs") who claim that Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad (1839–1908 CE) was a prophet. The Qādiyānīs do not deny the Qur'ānic passage that affirms the Prophet ﷺ as "the seal of the prophets" or the mass-transmitted ḥadīths that state no prophet will appear after him. They accept the Prophet ﷺ is "the last prophet" but in a specific sense. According to them, the Prophet's ﷺ finality means no independent prophet, who does not acquire his blessings via the Prophet ﷺ, can appear subsequent to him. They argue that the belief in the literal return of ʻĪsa (عليه السلام) violates the Prophet's ﷺ finality because he is an independent prophet. They claim further that the texts about ʻĪsa's (عليه السلام) return do not refer to a literal return but to the emergence of "ʻĪsa's (عليه السلام) likeness", which they identify with Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad. (See: *Aik Ghalṭī kā Izālah*, *Tawḍīḥ al-Marām*, *Mawāhib al-Raḥmān* and other writings of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad and his followers.)

Based on the classical consensus, of course, the texts about the Prophet's ﷺ finality mean that no prophet will be born or given prophethood subsequent to the Prophet ﷺ. ʻĪsa (عليه السلام) was given prophethood before the birth of the Prophet ﷺ, hence his literal return does not violate the Prophet's ﷺ finality. The Qādiyānī "*ta'wīl*" undercuts this unanimous traditional understanding. They do not outright reject Qur'ānic or mass-transmitted texts. Even still, there can be no doubt that the Qādiyānī belief renders them disbelievers (despite their "*ta'wīl*"). Indeed, doubting that they are disbelievers (after knowing their views) is itself sufficient to render even the doubter a disbeliever. This is true even though the Qādiyānīs ostensibly accept that "there is no god but Allāh and Muḥammad is His messenger".

Yet, as Imām al-Ghazālī explained, the only way to be absolutely certain that the texts affirming the finality of the Prophet ﷺ are not interpretable or deemed to be specific is the classical consensus. (*al-Iqtiṣād fi 'l-I'tiqād* [Dār al-Minhāj], p.308) The consensus scholarly tradition tells us that these texts are general and inclusive and cannot be interpreted otherwise. (*al-Shifā*, p.851)

The example of the Qādiyānīs, as well as other similar examples (like Ḥadīth-rejectors who doubt the location of Ḥajj), demonstrate that the classical consensus can be critical in determining whether the indication of a text or texts towards a certain meaning is definitive or not.

Note: The fact that a particular matter of religion is agreed upon and unanimous among the orthodox scholars of a particular era does not on its own render it "definitive", even if it is based on textual evidence. (*Radd al-Muḥtār*, 13:10) Definitiveness is also determined by the reliability of the textual evidence, the number of supporting texts, their strength and clarity, as assessed by traditional scholarly evaluation.

The Consensus of the Ṣaḥābah That *Ta'wīl* Does Not Avert Takfīr in the *Ḍarūriyyāt*

According to an authentic narration (*Nukhab al-Afkār* [Dār al-Nawādir] 15:531) found in *Sharḥ Ma'ānī al-Āthār* (Dār Ibn Ḥazm, no.4575) and *Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shaybah* (Sharikah Dār al-Qiblah, no.29000), during the reign of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (رضي الله عنه), a group of men from Syria not only consumed wine but denied its prohibition based on a misunderstanding of a verse of the Qur'ān. The verse appears immediately after the passage of the Qur'ān prohibiting wine and states: "There is no blame on those who believe and do righteous deeds for what they consume when they adopt taqwā." (Qur'ān, 5:93). The correct understanding of this verse is that it refers to those who consumed wine before its prohibition – they are not blameworthy for what they consumed, provided they maintain taqwā. These individuals from Syria, however, mistakenly thought this verse permitted them to drink wine, possibly thinking it abrogated the earlier prohibition or that the prohibition was conditional.

After they were apprehended, some Ṣaḥābah advised they be executed for "fabricating against Allāh and legislating something Allāh has not permitted". But 'Alī (رضي الله عنه) advised they be given an opportunity to repent, and if they refused, only then should they be executed, and if they repent, be lashed for drinking wine. The culprits were thus given the opportunity to repent (and take back their misunderstanding), which they did. They were then lashed eighty times.

Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ (305–370 AH) explains: "They drank it deeming it ḥalāl. Someone who deems what Allāh has made ḥarām to be ḥalāl is a disbeliever. This is why they were asked to repent." (*Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* [Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī], 4:128) 'Allāmah Ẓafar Aḥmad 'Uthmānī (1892–1974 CE) comments: "The narration gives a clear indication that *ta'wīl* is not accepted in the necessities of religion and the one engaging in *ta'wīl* is deemed a disbeliever. This was by consensus of the Ṣaḥābah." (*I'lā' al-Sunan* [Idārat al-Qur'ān], 12:635; *Ikfār al-Mulḥidīn*, pp.146–147)[4] Al-Bayāḍī (1044–1097 AH) states: "Some texts are known definitively to be held on their apparent so *ta'wīl* of it is rejection of the Prophet ﷺ, as opposed to other [texts]. This is stated in *Sharḥ al-Ta'dīl* and *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*." (*Ishārāt al-Marām* [Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah], p.35)

Similarly, Musaylimah, the false prophet, did not deny the oneness of Allāh or the prophethood of Muḥammad ﷺ, yet he was unanimously deemed a disbeliever by the Ṣaḥābah. (*I'lā' al-Sunan*, 12:636–637)

A group of individuals who had accepted Islām refused to pay Zakāt during the time of Abū Bakr (رضي الله عنه) based on their misunderstanding that a verse of the Qur'ān (9:103) means Zakāt

[4] Qudāmah ibn Maẓ'ūn (رضي الله عنه), a prominent Ṣaḥābī, also misunderstood verse 5:93 of the Qur'ān, but in a different manner. While he accepted the prohibition of wine, he mistakenly believed that if someone became intoxicated from wine and subsequently repented and rectified their ways (before being apprehended), the ḥadd (shar'ī punishment of lashing) for drinking wine would be waived. While his understanding was incorrect, it did not amount to disbelief. (*Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 4:128–9; *I'lā' al-Sunan*, 12:634–635)

was payable only to the Prophet ﷺ. This false understanding may have been an excuse to avert takfīr for those completely new to Islām, but once the knowledge of Zakāt being a continuous obligation became widely known, it was no longer an excuse. Hence, the Ṣaḥābah under the leadership of Abū Bakr (رضي الله عنه) fought them for their disbelief. (See for detail: *I'lā' Sunan*, 12:631–4; *al-Fatḥ al-Mubīn bi Sharḥ al-Arba'īn* [Dār al-Minhāj], p.269; *Ikfār al-Mulḥidīn*, pp.141–6)

'Allāmah Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī (1875–1933 CE) dedicated an entire book to the topic of *ta'wīl* not protecting someone who rejects the necessities of religion from takfīr, originally titled *Ikfār al-Muta'awwilīn wa 'l-Mulḥidīn fī Shay'in min Ḍarūriyyāt al-Dīn* (Deeming Those Who Misinterpret or Deviate Within Anything From the Necessities of the Religion to Have Disbelieved).

He explains: "Denying something definitive is disbelief. It is not a condition for disbelief that the denier recognises it to be definitive and then denies it, as some deluded individuals imagine. Rather, the condition is that it is definitive in actuality. If a person rejects this definitive matter, they will be asked to repent (from disbelief). If they repent (they are excused), otherwise, they will be executed for disbelief. There is no option besides this." (*Ikfār al-Mulḥidīn*, p.63)

He concludes: "This booklet concludes that meddling with the necessities of religion, subjecting them to reinterpretation, diverting them from their original sense and removing them from the outward form in which they were transmitted through recurrent reports is disbelief. When something is mass-transmitted, whether textually or semantically, and its meaning is clear, its purport becomes definitive. Thus, reinterpreting it constitutes a rejection of the definitive revealed doctrine – clear disbelief – even if the perpetrator does not explicitly belie the lawgiver. There is no alternative in such a case but to ask them to repent (from disbelief).

"As for someone claiming that it is necessary to instil certainty in their heart and make it comfortable (with the truth), and if they then remain obstinate after this, they have disbelieved but otherwise have not, such a claimant has negated any true reality to the religion and has left it to revolve with the imagination wherever it may turn. This is decisively false. Matters that are necessarily established are final. Whoever believes in them has adopted Allāh's religion, and whoever rejects them has disbelieved, even if they do not intend disbelief…Thus, just as in the matter of denying ontological realities, there are the 'obstinate deniers', 'subjectivists', 'agnostics' and 'sceptics', these types also exist in the denial of religious necessities, all of which are disbelief." (ibid., pp.187–8)

Mainstream Twelver Shīʻah & Takfīr

Apart from the principles described above, two points must be kept in mind when considering the question of whether mainstream Twelver Shīʻah are disbelievers or not.

First, just because a particular classical scholar judges the Shīʻah to be Muslims in general (and not disbelievers), this does not mean they did not recognise the Shīʻī beliefs described below to amount to disbelief. It may be that they were not aware that the Shīʻah in general held these views.[5] Hence, the focus should not merely be on what so-and-so scholar said about the Shīʻah, but on identifying the beliefs that the Shīʻah hold and viewing them in light of what the classical scholarly tradition has said about those beliefs.

Mawlānā Manẓūr Nuʻmānī (1905–1997 CE) highlights in his important study on Shīʻīism that many earlier scholars (with specific reference to Ibn ʻĀbidīn, Mujaddid Alf Thānī, Shāh Waliyyullāh al-Dihlawī and the authors of *Fatāwā ʻĀlamgīriyyah*) did not have a complete understanding of Shīʻī beliefs due to limited access to their books, given they lived before the era of mass print and mostly operated in different circles to the Shīʻah. (*Īrānī Inqilāb Imām Khumaynī aur Shīʻiyyat* [Maktabah Madaniyyah], pp.23–24)

ʻAllāmah Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī states: "There is disagreement concerning takfīr of the Rawāfiḍ (Shīʻah). Ibn ʻĀbidīn (1783–1836 CE) leaned towards not doing takfīr, while Ḥaḍrat Shāh ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz (1746–1824 CE) deemed them disbelievers. We also hold the latter view as correct. In reality, the exposure that Ḥaḍrat Shāh ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz had was not experienced by ʻAllāmah Shāmī. The difference is not based on the underlying rulings but over exposure. Alongside this, in our opinion Ḥaḍrat Shāh ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz was a greater jurist (*faqīh*) than ʻAllāmah Shāmī." (*Malfūẓāt Muḥaddith-i-Kashmīrī* [Idārat Taʼlīfāt Ashrafiyyah], p.269)

Earlier scholars did not claim for example that "the Shīʻah believe that the imāms are superior to the earlier prophets yet remain Muslims." All earlier scholars would have recognised that such a belief renders the person who holds it a disbeliever, though some may not have been aware that this was a mainstream Shīʻī belief. Moreover, as demonstrated in some instances below, the Shīʻah often took care to conceal their actual views, presenting them in a manner that appeared more acceptable. (*Īrānī Inqilāb Imām Khumaynī aur Shīʻiyyat* [Maktabah Madaniyyah], pp.23–24)

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[5] Shaykh ʻAlī al-Shabrāmalsī (d. 1087 AH), a Shāfiʻī jurist, explained a particular reference to a "*mubtadiʻ*" (innovator) as referring to "a *mubtadiʻ* who we do not deem to be a disbeliever on account of their innovation, such as the Shīʻah and Rāfiḍah". A later Shāfiʻī jurist, Shaykh ʻAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Sharawānī (d. 1884 CE), commented that this was "in terms of his time", but the Shīʻah of his own day were rarely free of beliefs that rendered them disbelievers, e.g. anathematising Abū Bakr (رضي الله عنه). (*Ḥawāshī al-Sharawānī wa ʻl-ʻAbbādī ʻalā Tuḥfat al-Muḥtāj* [Dār al-Ḥadīth], 8:656) A more likely explanation of why a scholar like al-Shabrāmalsī would have taken a softer stance towards the Shīʻah is that he was not fully acquainted with Shīʻī beliefs, as opposed to it being because the Shīʻah of his day did not adopt the same stance.

Second, the Shīʿah have fabricated an entire corpus of falsehoods to distort the meanings of much of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, forcing them to align with their warped understanding of "imāmah" and the political and religious succession after the Prophet ﷺ being exclusive to certain members of the Ahl al-Bayt. Through these fabrications and distortions, they blinded themselves from the truth. However, this self-delusion does not excuse them, just like the lies and fabrications the Jews and Christians invented do not excuse them. As the Qur'ān states (about Jews): "The lies they forged have deluded them in their religion." (Qur'ān, 3:24)

The falsehoods the Shīʿah fabricated include narrations attributed to the "imāms" – largely, though not exclusively, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (80–148 AH) – and reinterpretations of verses of the Qur'ān to fit their deviant views, resulting in an entire theology (or mythology) that they imposed onto the texts and historical record. This activity of the Shīʿah began very early on, hence as far back as the second century of Hijrah the Shīʿah were widely recognised as the most notorious fabricators of lies. (*Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*, 1:60–4)

Shīʻī Belief in the Imāms Being Functionally Prophets & Occupying a Position Above the Prophets

Mainstream Twelver Shīʻah believe in twelve divinely-appointed imāms (born after the Prophet ﷺ) who receive revelation – i.e. divine messages communicated to them via an angel in a manner that is definitive & necessary to accept and follow (*Nasīm al-Riyāḍ* [Dār al-Kutub al-ʻIlmiyyah], 6:357)[6] – who are believed to be immune from sin and error (*maʻṣūm*), possess knowledge of the unseen and must be believed and followed, such that rejecting that they are imāms or "Allāh's proofs on earth" (collectively or individually) results in eternal damnation in Hell. They regard these imāms as occupying a similar status to the Prophet ﷺ and as being superior to all previous prophets (which is itself explicit disbelief). Many further claim that these imāms have full authority over creation and legislation. (*Mustaqbal al-ʻAlāqah maʻa al-Shīʻah* [Dār al-Nūr al-Mubīn], pp.51–3)

While Shīʻah do not refer to these imāms as "prophets", there is no substantive difference in their theology between the qualities and function of a prophet and an imām. The difference is merely semantic. (ibid., p.55) Ibn Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī (648–726 AH), known amongst Shīʻah as "'Allāmah", states: "The Imāmīs (i.e. Twelver Shīʻah) opine that the imāms are equivalent to prophets in terms of the necessity of their being immune (*ʻiṣmah*) from all evils and immoralities, from childhood until death, whether deliberate or by mistake, as they are the protectors of the Sharīʻah and its upholders. Their condition in this regard is equivalent to that of the prophet." (*Nahj al-Ḥaqq wa Kashf al-Ṣidq* [Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī], p.164; see also: *Aṣl al-Shīʻah wa Uṣūluhā* [Dār al-Aḍwā'], p.134)

Explaining the distinction between prophets and imāms, al-Majlisī (1037–1111 AH) states: "The imāms are deputies of the Messenger ﷺ, not delivering (messages) except by deputyship. As for the prophets, even while following the sharīʻah of another, they are sent independently. Even still, the deputyship (of the imāms) is more honourable than the independence (of the past prophets). In short, we must affirm that they are not prophets, and they are more noble and superior to the prophets and their designated successors, apart from our Prophet ﷺ. We know of no reason for their not being characterised with prophethood besides being mindful of the pre-eminence of the Seal of the Prophets. Our minds do not grasp a clear distinction between

[6] Al-Mufīd and other Shīʻī writers state that the term "*waḥy*" (revelation) is reserved only for the prophets and must not be used for the imāms. However, while negating the term "*waḥy*", they affirm its reality for the imāms: angels visiting them who convey messages from Allāh in a manner that is definitive & necessary to accept and follow. (*Biḥār al-Anwār*, 26:289–90) Hence, it is similar to how Shīʻah do not use the term "prophet" for the imāms while affirming for them the same function and qualities.

prophethood and imāmah. You are aware of what the reports indicate." (*Biḥār al-Anwār* [Mu'assasat al-A'lamī li 'l-Maṭbū'āt], 26:289)

In other words, the imāms are not considered "prophets" only because they are deputies of the Prophet ﷺ, while earlier prophets were independent appointees (and were not deputies of others). Thus, while the Shī'ah refrain from the term "prophet" for the imāms, they affirm that they are functionally prophets – i.e. are divinely-appointed, receive revelation, are immune from sin, must be obeyed as "Allāh's proofs on earth" and are even superior to past prophets!

Such a belief is of course clear disbelief. Shāh Waliyyullāh al-Dihlawī states: "Someone who says…that the Prophet ﷺ is the Seal of Prophethood, but the meaning of this term is that it is not permitted to call someone a prophet after him, but as far as the function of prophethood is concerned – that Allāh (Exalted is He) sends a person to the creation whose obedience is necessary and who is protected from sins and (is protected) from remaining upon error in something they opined – then this is found in the imāms after him, such an individual is a zindīq (disbeliever)." (*al-Musawwā* [Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah], 2:269)

The doctrine of imāmah is so central to the Shī'ah that they consider the denial of the office of the imāms (after evidence has reached someone) to be equivalent to the denial of the Prophet ﷺ, i.e. clear disbelief. However, while they consider orthodox Muslims (Ahl al-Sunnah) to be "disbelievers" in an "inward" sense (in reality), they still regard them as "Muslims" in the outward (worldly) sense. In other words, they believe that those who reject the office of the imāms are destined for eternity in Hell, but outwardly, in this world, they can still be treated as "Muslims". (*Biḥār al-Anwār*, 8:523–529; 25:220; see also: *al-Sharḥ al-Kabīr 'ala 'l-'Aqīdat al-Ṭaḥāwiyyah* [Dār al-Dhakhā'ir], pp.925–9; *Mustaqbal al-'Alāqah ma'a al-Shī'ah*, pp.63–7)

Shīʻī Belief in the Damnation of the Prophet's ﷺ Greatest Companion

Twelver Shīʻah also believe that Abū Bakr (رضي الله عنه), the Prophet's ﷺ closest and greatest companion, is not amongst the people of salvation and Paradise, despite this being established via mass-transmitted narrations from the Prophet ﷺ, as well as the consensus of the ummah. Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (683–756 AH) states: "The prohibition of cursing (Abū Bakr) al-Ṣiddīq is known by necessity from the religion, based on the mass-transmitted reports of his excellent Islām and actions proving his faith, and that he remained upon this until Allāh took him. There is no doubt in this, even if the Rāfiḍī doubts it. For someone like this, the prohibition of cursing and insulting him is known to be forbidden by necessity from the religion. Hence, the one deeming it lawful is a disbeliever." (*Fatāwā al-Subkī* [Dār al-Maʻrifah], 2:587)

In other words, not only is Abū Bakr (رضي الله عنه) being from the people of Paradise a known and definitive belief, but the consequent prohibition of cursing or insulting him is also recognised as such. Al-Subkī notes that the mere fact that the Shīʻah cast doubt on this (based on a mythology they have invented) does not create any real doubt about it. In fact, it is mass-transmitted from ʻAlī (رضي الله عنه) himself that the best of this ummah after the Prophet ﷺ is Abū Bakr (رضي الله عنه). (*Siyar Aʻlām al-Nubalā': al-Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn* [Muʼassasat al-Risālah], pp.78–9)

Al-Subkī further states: "Those who make takfīr of the Shīʻah and Khawārij argue from their takfīr of the prominent Ṣaḥābah and (thus) their rejection of the Prophet ﷺ in his definitive judgment of Paradise for them. This, in my opinion, is a sound argument about those (Shīʻah and Khawārij) from whom it is established that they do takfīr of such (Ṣaḥābah)." (*Fatāwā al-Subkī*, 2:569).

Imām al-Ghazālī states: "Numerous reports have been transmitted about them (i.e. Abū Bakr and ʻUmar رضي الله عنهما), promising them Paradise, praising them, judging their religion to be sound, their belief strong and their excellence over the rest of creation. If these reports reach someone who then opines (they are disbelievers), and he believes they are disbelievers despite this, he is a disbeliever – not because of his takfīr of them (per se), but because of rejecting the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ." (*Faḍā'iḥ al-Bāṭiniyyah* [Dār Faris], pp.347)

Abu ʻl-ʻAbbās al-Qurṭubī (578–656 AH) states: "There is no disagreement that someone who says the Ṣaḥābah were (en masse) upon disbelief or deviance is a disbeliever who is executed. (This is) because he has denied something known by necessity from the religion, given that he has belied Allāh and His Messenger in the information they gave about them. The same rule applies to those who deem any one of the four caliphs to be disbelievers or deviants. There is disagreement whether they are ruled to be an apostate, so they will be given the opportunity to repent, or are ruled to be a zindīq, so they will not be given this opportunity and will be executed in all cases." (*al-Mufhim* [Dār Ibn Kathīr], 6:493)

Shāh Waliyyullāh al-Dihlawī states: "Someone who says about the two shaykhs, Abū Bakr and ʻUmar, for example, that they are not from the inhabitants of Paradise, despite the ḥadīths being

mass-transmitted about giving them glad tidings (of it)…such an individual is a zindīq." (*al-Musawwā*, 2:269)

Al-Ālūsī (1802–1854 CE) states: "In summary, takfīr of one of the Ṣaḥābah whose imān, integrity and not being a munāfiq have been (definitively) established, and then proceeding to curse him, based only on a doubt weaker than a spider's web, is explicit disbelief, in which there ought to be no hesitation. The Shī'ah of our time have the greatest share of this disbelief because they do takfīr of…the likes of Abū Bakr and 'Umar." (*al-Ajwibat al-'Irāqiyyah 'ala 'l-As'ilat al-Lāhūriyyah* [Dār Ibn al-Qayyim], pp.169–70)

In other words, the fabrications the Shī'ah have invented to blind themselves to this reality are nothing but doubts "weaker than a spider's web" that do not excuse their disbelief.

He further states: "That which is narrated from some that the insulter (of the Ṣaḥābah) is struck or severely punished refers to an insult that does not entail takfīr of them, Allāh be pleased with them, and is devoid of the claim of animosity, apostasy and deeming it lawful to harm them. It does not mean the rule of the insulter is always such as is obvious to the researcher." (ibid., p.150)

Al-Majlisī states: "The reports indicating that the first (i.e. Abū Bakr) and the second (i.e. 'Umar) and their likes are disbelievers, along with the reward for cursing them, disassociating from them and things comprising their innovations are more numerous than can be cited in this volume or many volumes. What we have cited is sufficient." (*Biḥār al-Anwār*, 30:419–20) He then claims that reports from the Ahl al-Bayt praising them are few and isolated, with *taqiyyah* (dissimulation) evident in them. (ibid.) Al-Mufīd quotes a consensus of the Shī'ah that Abū Bakr (رضي الله عنه) "will eternally dwell in Hell for his oppression" – Allāh forbid. (See: *al-Fikr al-Tafkīrī 'ind al-Shī'ah* [Maktab al-Imām al-Bukhārī], p.65) Keep in mind the distinction Shī'ah make between an outward and inward disbeliever. They will not deem orthodox Muslims outward disbelievers (like Jews and Christians) but will deem them inward disbelievers, believing them to be destined for eternity in Hell, while still referring to them and treating them as "Muslims".

Shī‘ī Belief in the Corruption of the Incorruptible Qur’ān

Many Shī‘ah also believe the Qur’ān we have today has been corrupted and reduced in size from its original form. For a detailed exposition of this belief from one of their own, one may refer to *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb fī Ithbāt Taḥrīf Kitāb Rabb al-Arbāb*, authored in Arabic by Mīrzā Ḥusayn ibn Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī al-Nūrī al-Ṭabrasī (1839–1902 CE), a leading recent Shī‘ī traditionist (compiler of *Mustadrak al-Wasā’il*) from Iran/Iraq. It is a large book (running into nearly a thousand pages in a 2021 edition by Mu’assasat al-Intishār al-‘Arabī), originally written in 1875 CE and published in 1881 CE, to affirm Shī‘ī belief in the Qur’ān having been corrupted.

A Shī‘ī contemporary of al-Ṭabrasī wrote a rejoinder, to which al-Ṭabrasī responded in a small Farsi booklet (appended to *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*). His response was approved by the leading Shī‘ī scholar of that era (and one of his principal teachers): Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Shīrāzī (1815–1895). Furthermore, al-Ṭabrasī’s student, Āgā Bozorg Tehrānī (1875–1970), a prominent Shī‘ī scholar in his own right, also authored a work supporting his teacher’s view. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Āl Kāshif al-Ghiṭā’ (1877–1954 CE), another recent Shī‘ī scholar, endorsed the latter book but stated that such a view should not be made public. (*Faṣl al-Khiṭāb* [Mu’assasat al-Intishār al-‘Arabī], p.911) It is clear from this short survey that the view of the Qur’ān’s corruption is a mainstream (not fringe) Shī‘ī view that has made its way right into the modern period. However, some Shī‘ī scholars felt it should be kept under wraps, while others held the opposing view (i.e. that the Qur’ān has not been corrupted).

Al-Ṭabrasī details various types of possible alterations to the Qur’ān and explains the forms he believes occurred, e.g. missing sūrahs and verses, the addition or omission of individual words and changes to specific words. (ibid., pp.156–61) He rules out that any complete sūrahs or verses were added to the Qur’ān and claims that the type of corruption he believes occurred does not render the Qur’ān untrustworthy, as the verses related to juristic rules were unaffected and the alterations do not include any major additions (rather only deletions and changes to individual words). Importantly, he demonstrates quite clearly that the belief in the Qur’ān’s corruption was held by most classical Shī‘ī authorities, including ‘Alī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qummī (from the third and early fourth centuries of Hijrah), al-Kulaynī (d. 329 AH), al-‘Ayyāshī (from the third and early fourth centuries of Hijrah), the Nawbakhtīs and many others. (ibid. pp.164–82) He also notes that some prominent Shī‘ī figures like al-Ṣadūq and al-Ṭūsī held the opposing view (that the Qur’ān has not been altered in any way), though they are in a minority.

Al-Ṭabrasī presents a dozen “evidences” to support his view that the Qur’ān was subject to alteration and has not been preserved in its original form. A key argument he makes is that the majority of Shī‘ah (with some exceptions) reject the ḥadīth about the Qur’ān being revealed in seven modes and the phenomenon of multiple *qirā’āt* (readings) all tracing back to revelation. According to them, the *qirā’āt* do not necessarily represent how the Qur’ān was revealed, but are merely human guesses, some correct and others not. Hence, even many definitive readings according to this Shī‘ī understanding are erroneous. (ibid., pp.518–555) Based on this Shī‘ī

understanding, Abū ‘l-Qāsim al-Khū’ī (1899–1992 CE), a prominent recent Shī‘ī leader, asserts that Qur’ānic corruption (*taḥrīf*) in the sense of adding or removing letters or vowels has “definitely occurred”. He states: “The revealed Qur’ān only accords with one of the *qirā’āt*; as for the rest it is either something added to the Qur’ān or removed from it.” (*al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān* [Mu’assasat al-Khū’ī al-Islāmiyyah], p.198) Of course, rejecting a definitive reading of the Qur’ān is obvious disbelief.

Moreover, the majority of Shī‘ah hold that no abrogation occurred in the text of the Qur’ān (i.e. a revealed Qur’ānic text was never removed from the final Qur’ānic corpus by divine instruction). Hence, according to this understanding, revealed texts that were abrogated (like the verse about stoning the adulterer) in fact belong to the final Qur’ānic corpus but were not preserved. (*Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, pp.333–57)

In his final “evidence”, al-Ṭabrasī compiles over a thousand narrations from Shī‘ī sources documenting the distortions they claim to have occurred in the Qur’ān right the way from Sūrah al-Fātiḥah up to Sūrah al-Nās. For example, he cites a report in which an individual recited the famous verse, “You are the best nation brought out for the people” (Qur’ān, 3:110), at which Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq remarked: “The best nation kills Amīr al-Mu’minīn, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn?!” The reciter then asked how it was revealed. Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq replied: “It was revealed as: ‘You are the best imāms (*a’immah*) brought out for the people.’” (*Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, p.614; *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, 1:10)

Similarly, a verse states: “Whoever obeys Allāh and His Messenger, indeed he has attained a great success.” (Qur’ān, 33:71) According to a Shī‘ī narration, Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq recited it as: “Whoever obeys Allāh and His Messenger about the leadership of ‘Alī and the imāms after him (*fī wilāyati ‘Alī wa ‘l-a’immah min ba‘dihī*), indeed he has attained a great success.” According to the report, Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq said: “This is how it was revealed, by Allāh.” (*Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, p.719; *al-Kāfī* [Manshūrāt al-Fajr], 1:260; *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, 2:198)

Al-Ṭabrasī notes that there have been Shī‘ī figures who offered alternative explanations to such narrations, namely a) that they refer to revelation outside of the Qur’ān, b) they are explanatory glosses, c) they represent different valid readings, d) they are weak. Al-Ṭabrasī counters all these alternative explanations and states that while some of these narrations are indeed weak, a large number are sound (according to Shī‘ī methodology).

There were undoubtedly Shī‘ī scholars who rejected the view of Qur’ānic corruption, and most Shī‘ī scholars today publicly reject it. (*Īrānī Inqilāb Imām Khumaynī aur Shī‘iyyat*, p.49, p.245). Some may do so sincerely, while others for “expediency”. In an Arabic work, Rūḥullāh Khomeinī strongly opposes al-Ṭabrasī’s view of Qur’ānic corruption while still describing him as a “righteous” “researcher”. However, Khomeinī also acknowledges that belief in Qur’ānic corruption is widespread among the Shī‘ī masses. (*Anwār al-Hidāyah* [Mu’assasah Tanẓīm wa Nashr Āthār al-Imām al-Khumaynī], 1:244–7; see also: *Ṣūratān Mutaḍāddatān ‘inda Ah al-*

Sunnah wa ‘l-Shī‘ah al-Imāmiyyah [Dār al-Bashīr], pp.52–53; *Īrānī Inqilāb Imām Khumaynī aur Shī‘iyyat*, p.59)

Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (1007–1091 AH), a well-known Shī‘ī traditionist, states: “It is derived from the totality of these and other reports via the Ahl al-Bayt that the Qur’ān we have in our midst is not completely like it was as revealed to Muḥammad ﷺ. Rather, within it are things different from what Allāh revealed, and some of it has been altered and corrupted, while many things have been omitted from it. Among these (omissions) are ‘Alī’s, upon him peace, name in many places, the term ‘family of Muḥammad’ numerous times and the names of the hypocrites.” (*al-Tafsīr al-Ṣāfī* [Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah], 1:87)

Al-Majlisī states: “It is evident that this report, along with many authentic reports, are explicit about the Qur’ān being incomplete and altered. In my view, the reports on this topic are mass-transmitted in terms of meaning. Rejecting all of them would necessitate discarding trust in reports altogether. Indeed, I believe that the reports on this topic are not less than the reports regarding imāmah, so how can they affirm imāmah based on reports (while rejecting this)?” (*Mir’āt al-‘Uqūl* [Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah], 12:525)

Ni‘matullāh al-Jazā’irī (1050–1112 AH), a Shī‘ī traditionist from Iraq, writes: “Abundant, mass-transmitted reports explicitly show that textual corruption has occurred in the Qur’ān with our companions agreeing they are authentic and affirming them. Yes, al-Murtaḍā, al-Ṣadūq and Shaykh Ṭūsī dissented on this and judged that whatever is between the two covers of this muṣḥaf is alone the revealed Qur’ān, and no corruption or alteration has occurred in it… It appears that this view emerged from them only for numerous benefits, including shutting the door to impugning the Qur’ān based on (the argument) that if this is possible in the Qur’ān, how is it possible to implement its principles and rules given it is possibly corrupted? The answer to this will come. How can this (corruption) not be so, when these luminaries narrated in their books many reports comprising of the occurrence of these matters in the Qur’ān, and (stating) that a verse was revealed in a certain way and was then changed to such-and-such?” (*al-Anwār al-Nu‘māniyyah* [Dār al-Qāri’], 2:246–7).

He further states that the Shī‘ah are instructed to recite the Qur’ān in its present form, despite its (alleged) alterations and missing sections, until the Mahdī emerges and reveals the complete unaltered version. (ibid., 2:248–9)

There should be nothing surprising about Shī‘ah holding such a view, given their low opinion of the followers of the Prophet ﷺ and the need for them to explain why a doctrine so central to their theology – i.e. imāmah – is missing from the Qur’ān. They accept that the Qur’ān we have today was standardised by ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān (رضي الله عنه), and the reading traditions are transmitted through non-Shī‘ī chains. Given their low opinion of orthodox Muslims (as

described earlier), it can hardly be surprising that they believe the ummah erred in preserving the Qur'ān and its proper recitation.[7]

In short, the belief of Qur'ānic corruption is not only a mainstream Shī'ī view (although there have been dissenters both past and present), it is entirely consistent with their general outlook and mythology. Of course, there can be no doubt that the belief that the Qur'ān has been altered is clear disbelief. (*al-Shifā*, p.854; *Marātib al-Ijmā'* [Dār al-Fatḥ], p.682)

[7] Al-Ṭabrasī argues there is nothing extraordinary about orthodox Muslims (Ahl al-Sunnah) being mistaken in transmitting even something as popular and widely read as the Qur'ān, given several other popular acts in which the Shī'ah differ from them, e.g. the Shī'ah add: "*ḥayya 'alā khayr al-'amal*" to the Adhān and reject wiping over leather socks for wuḍū'. (*Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, pp.834–41)

The Twelver Shīʻah Are Disbelievers

Given the reality of Shīʻī beliefs as described above, there can be no doubt that mainstream Twelver Shīʻah (who are faithful followers of Twelver Shīʻīism) are not Muslims but are disbelievers. Imām al-Ālūsī (1802–1854 CE) states: "Amongst those who judged the Shīʻah to be disbelievers and included their lands within Dār al-Ḥarb are a group of the later scholars like ʻAllāmah Ibn Kamāl Pāshā (873–940 AH), Shaykh al-Islām Abu ʻl-Suʻūd (898–982 AH) and others." (*al-Ajwibat al-ʻIrāqiyyah ʻala ʻl-Asʼilat al-Lāhūriyyah* [Dār Ibn al-Qayyim], p.171–2)

Shaykh ʻAzīz al-Raḥmān Deobandī (1859–1928 CE), the first head muftī of Dār al-ʻUlūm Deoband, states: "Most Shīʻī individuals are such that there is a fatwā of kufr on them. Based on the principles of religion, there is no doubt about their disbelief. Hence, their slaughtered animals and establishing marriage links with them must be avoided." (*Fatāwā Dār al-ʻUlūm Deoband* [Maktabah Dār al-ʻUlūm Deoband], 18:445; see also: *Bāqiyāt Fatāwā Rashīdiyyah*, p.19)

ʻAllāmah Khalīl Aḥmad Sahāranpūrī (1852–1927 CE) states: "According to the verifiers, the Rāfiḍīs (Shīʻah) are disbelievers, in the same category as apostates. Hence, their slaughtered meat is not ḥalāl." (*Fatāwā Maẓāhir-i-ʻUlūm* [Maktabat al-Shaykh], 1:287)

By adopting a principled methodology and considering the historic theological positions of mainstream Twelver Shīʻah as maintained to the present, it becomes evident that they cannot be deemed Muslims any more than Qādiyānīs can. The differing views amongst classical scholars over whether they are disbelievers or not derives primarily from the degree of awareness of their actual beliefs, not from ambiguity about the nature of such beliefs as described above. The beliefs described above – i.e. attributing to the imāms qualities and functions tantamount to prophethood, deeming them superior to past prophets, claiming the Prophet's ﷺ greatest companion will suffer eternal punishment in the next life and claiming that the Qur'ān in its present form is corrupted or that definitive readings of the Qur'ān are erroneous – are unequivocally disbelief, and there can be no doubt about those who hold them (or some of them) being disbelievers. Classical scholars did not disagree over the principle that those who adhere to such views are disbelievers.